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AMEMBASSY MOSCOW IMMEDIATE

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ALMATY FOR DUSHANBE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2/18/09

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SUBJECT: TALIBAN CLAIM BIN LADEN OUT OF THEIR TERRITORY

REF: A) ISLAMABAD 875 (NOTAL) B) ISLAMABAD 1171 (NOTAL)  
C) ISLAMABAD 1273 (NOTAL) D) ISLAMABAD 1271 (NOTAL)

CLASSIFIED BY KARL F. INDERFURTH, A/S, SA. REASON: 1.5 (D).

1. (S) SUMMARY: TALIBAN UN "PERMREP DESIGNATE" ABDUL HAKEEM MUJAHID TOLD SA A/S INDERFURTH FEBRUARY 17 THAT USAMA BIN LADEN (UBL) WAS NO LONGER IN TALIBAN-CONTROLLED TERRITORY. HE WOULD NOT PROVIDE FURTHER DETAILS BUT IMPLIED THAT UBL WAS ELSEWHERE IN AFGHANISTAN THOUGH EN ROUTE TO A FOREIGN DESTINATION. HE SAID THE CIRCUMSTANCES WOULD BE CLARIFIED IN THREE OR FOUR WEEKS. A/S INDERFURTH EXPRESSED DISAPPOINTMENT THAT UBL HAD NOT BEEN EXPELLED TO A JURISDICTION WHERE HE COULD BE BROUGHT TO JUSTICE; THIS WAS OUR ULTIMATE GOAL. HE ALSO ASKED THE TALIBAN TO EXPEL UBL'S NETWORK FROM AFGHANISTAN AND CLOSE EXISTING TERRORIST TRAINING FACILITIES. MUJAHID ASKED THAT USG PUBLIC STATEMENTS ON THIS DEVELOPMENT NOT DWELL ON EXISTING DIFFERENCES WITH THE TALL BAN, NOTING THAT THIS WOULD WEAKEN ELEMENTS WITHIN THE TALIBAN OPPOSED TO UBL. A/S INDERFURTH REPLIED THAT WHILE WE COULD NOT WISH AWAY OTHER ISSUES, BIN LADEN'S DEPARTURE FROM AFGHANISTAN WOULD REMOVES A MAJOR ROADBLOCK TO FUTURE PROGRESS. END SUMMARY.

2. (U) SA A/S KARL F. INDERFURTH CALLED IN TALIBAN NEW YORK "PERMREP DESIGNATE" ABDUL HAKEEM MUJAHID FEBRUARY 1~ PRIMARILY TO REVIEW RECENT DEVELOPMENTS REGARDING USAMA BIN LADEN (UBL) AND AS PART OF OUR SERIES OF CONTACTS WITH THE AFGHAN FACTIONS. MUJAHID WAS ACCOMPANIED BY HIS ASSISTANT NOORULLAH ZADRAN. SA/PAB DIRECTOR MALINOWSKI AND AFGHAN DESKOFF RAPOPORT SAT IN. THE MEETING LASTED ALMOST 90 MINUTES.

WHERE IS USAMA?

3. (S) A/S INDERFURTH REVIEWED HIS FEBRUARY 3 MEETING WITH TALIBAN "DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER" MULLAH JALIL IN ISLAMABAD, RESTATING POINTS DELIVERED ON THAT OCCASION (REF A). HE NOTED THE TALIBAN RESPONSE THAT THEY HAD IMPOSED FURTHER RESTRICTIONS UPON UBL (REF B) BUT STATED THAT THIS DID NOT RESOLVE THE PROBLEM. HE CITED RECENT REPORTS OF ONGOING THREATENING ACTIVITIES FROM UBL AND HIS NETWORK AND MADE THE POINT THAT RECENT REPORTS FROM TALIBAN SOURCES THAT UBL HAD "GONE MISSING" (REF C) CONTRADICTED TALIBAN CLAIMS TO HAVE HIM UNDER CONTROL.

14. (S) MUJAHID CITED THE IMPORTANCE OF A/S INDERFURTH'S MESSAGE TO JALIL AND SAID HE HAD PERSONALLY CONTACTED VARIOUS TALIBAN AUTHORITIES TO GET A POSITIVE RESPONSE SO AS TO PROMOTE A CLOSER RELATIONSHIP WITH THE U.S. HE ASSERTED THAT IT WAS DIFFICULT FOR THE TALIBAN TO EXPEL UBL BECAUSE OF THE EFFECT UPON PUBLIC OPINION IN AFGHANISTAN AND THE ISLAMIC WORLD, BUT THE TALIBAN HAD IMPOSED RESTRICTIONS UPON HIM IN HOPES OF FORCING HIM TO LEAVE WILLINGLY. MUJAHID THEN DECLARED THAT UBL WAS NO LONGER IN TALIBAN-CONTROLLED TERRITORY BUT WOULD NOT SAY WHERE HE WAS OR HOW THIS HAD COME ABOUT, ONLY THAT THE SITUATION WOULD BE CLARIFIED IN THREE OR FOUR WEEKS. HE INTIMATED THAT UBL MIGHT STILL BE IN AFGHANISTAN, PERHAPS WITH A COMMANDER NOT LINKED TO THE TALIBAN (IN THIS CONTEXT HE REFERRED TO UBL'S PREVIOUS TIES TO HEKMATYAR, SAYYAF, AND MASOOD.) BUT THAT HIS ULTIMATE DESTINATION WAS AN UNSPECIFIED OTHER COUNTRY. HE STATED THAT TALIBAN LEADER MULLAH OMAR HAD ANNOUNCED UBL'S DEPARTURE PUBLICLY OVER TALIBAN RADIO SHARIAT; HE PROCEEDED TO DO THE SAME WITH AWAITING JOURNALISTS AFTER THE MEETING.

BRING UBL TO JUSTICE

15. (S) A/S INDERFURTH SAID WE WERE DISAPPOINTED THAT THE TALIBAN HAD NOT EXPELLED UBL TO A JURISDICTION WHERE HE COULD BE BROUGHT TO JUSTICE. HE EXPRESSED FURTHER CONCERN REGARDING THE TIME NECESSARY TO DETERMINE UBL'S WHEREABOUTS, NOTING THAT THE AMBIGUITY POSED CERTAIN RISKS FOR AFGHANISTAN AND URGED THAT THE TALIBAN PROVIDE MORE INFORMATION AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE. IF UBL STAGED A TERRORIST ACT DURING THIS INTERIM PERIOD, BEFORE HIS WHEREABOUTS COULD BE ESTABLISHED, THE TALIBAN COULD STILL BE HELD RESPONSIBLE. HE STATED WE WOULD CONTINUE EFFORTS TO LOCATE HIM, ADDING THAT IT WOULD BE TAKEN AS AN ACT OF BAD FAITH IF UBL WERE PERMITTED TO RETURN TO TALIBAN-CONTROLLED TERRITORY. MUJAHID RESPONDED THAT UBL WOULD NOT RETURN TO TALIBAN TERRITORY, THOUGH HE LATER CAVEATED THAT THIS WAS NOT IN HIS OFFICIAL INSTRUCTIONS.

AND EXPEL HIS FOLLOWERS

16. (S) A/S INDERFURTH ADDED THAT WE WERE ALSO CONCERNED ABOUT UBL'S NETWORK AND TRAINING CAMPS INSIDE AFGHANISTAN. HE HOPED THE TALIBAN WOULD TAKE QUICK ACTION TO REMOVE THESE SUPPORT STRUCTURES AND EXPEL THOSE MEMBERS OF HIS NETWORK LEFT BEHIND. MUJAHID RESPONDED THAT AFGHANISTAN HAD NEVER BEEN A TERRORIST STATE AND THAT AFGHANS HAD NEVER COMMITTED ACTS OF INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM, EVEN AGAINST THE SOVIETS. THE TALIBAN ITSELF DID NOT SUPPORT AN AVOWEDLY EXPANSIONIST INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALIST MOVEMENT, LIKE IRANIAN-SUPPORTED HEZBOLLAH OR THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD, AND WAS NOT IN FAVOR OF THE TRAINING IN AFGHANISTAN OF KASHMIRIS, ARABS, SAUDIS, SUDANESE OR OTHERS IN TECHNIQUES OF TERRORISM. MUJAHID NOTED THAT BIN LADEN'S PERSONAL VIEW OF INTERNATIONAL ISLAM WAS MUCH CLOSER TO THAT OF MANY OF THE TALIBAN'S AFGHAN RIVALS THAN TO THAT OF THE TALIBAN ITSELF. MUJAHID EQUIVOCATED ABOUT THE EXISTENCE OF CAMPS IN TALIBAN TERRITORY BUT A/S INDERFURTH REPEATED THAT THEY WERE PRESENT AND THAT STEPS SHOULD BE TAKEN TO DISMANTLE THEM.

POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT REQUESTED

17. (S) NOTING THAT THE TALIBAN HAD PUT ITSELF IN A DIFFICULT POSITION REGARDING UBL, MUJAHID ASKED THAT USG PUBLIC STATEMENTS NOT DWELL ON DIFFERENCES OVER OTHER ISSUES (I.E. DRUGS, HUMAN RIGHTS, GENDER, ETC.), STATING THAT THIS WOULD WEAKEN THOSE WITHIN THE TALIBAN WHO FAVORED BETTER RELATIONS WITH THE U.S. HE URGED A POSITIVE REFERENCE TO THIS ACTION. A/S INDERFURTH SAID THAT WE WOULD CONSIDER UBL'S DEPARTURE A POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT, NOTING THAT BIN LADEN HAD BEEN A MAJOR OBSTACLE, "A BOULDER IN THE ROAD." WE COULD NOT WISH OTHER ISSUES AWAY, BUT ONCE BIN LADEN WAS BEHIND US WE COULD ADDRESS THESE ISSUES,

INCLUDING HUMAN RIGHTS, BILATERALLY AND THROUGH THE UN IN AN EFFORT TO IMPROVE OUR RELATIONSHIP. MUJAHID CITED THE STRONG U.S. RELATIONSHIP WITH ISLAMIC SAUDI ARABIA AND SAID WE COULD HAVE EVEN BETTER RELATIONS WITH THE TALIBAN.

¶18. AS AN EXAMPLE OF A POSITIVE STEP, A/S INDERFURTH NOTED HIS SIGNATURE YESTERDAY ON A DISASTER DECLARATION THAT WOULD AUTHORIZE HUMANITARIAN RELIEF FOR VICTIMS OF THE FEBRUARY 11 EARTHQUAKE (REF D) AS A POSITIVE STEP AND EVIDENCE OF OUR DESIRE TO HELP THE AFGHAN PEOPLE.

#### TALIBAN EXPANDING CONTACTS

¶19. (S) A/S INDERFURTH RAISED UN SPECIAL ENVOY BRAHIMI'S UPCOMING VISIT TO THE REGION, NOTING THAT IT WAS COMING AT A TIME WHEN THE TALIBAN WAS EXPANDING CONTACTS WITH OTHER AFGHAN FACTIONS AND WITH AFGHAN MODERATES. HE STRESSED OUR BELIEF THAT THERE IS NO MILITARY SOLUTION TO THE CONFLICT BUT RATHER A NEED FOR A POLITICAL SETTLEMENT AND URGED THE TALIBAN TO WORK WITH BRAHIMI IN THIS REGARD. MUJAHID ACKNOWLEDGED THE CONTACTS WITH MASOOD AND THE NEUTRALS, ADDING THAT THE TALIBAN HAD ALSO BEEN IN CONTACT WITH PROFESSOR BURHANUDDIN RABBANI'S PEOPLE IN DUBAI AS WELL. HE AGREED THAT A MILITARY SOLUTION WAS "NOT DESIRABLE" BUT SAID THAT DIPLOMATIC MEANS DID NOT ALWAYS WORK. MUJAHID WAS SOMEWHAT SKEPTICAL ABOUT THE AFGHAN MODERATES, WHOM HE DESCRIBED AS PARTISANS OF THE FORMER KING. HE SAID THEY CONFINED THEIR ACTIVITIES TO "MAKING INEFFECTIVE STATEMENTS ABROAD," BUT THEY SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED TO RETURN TO AFGHANISTAN AND WORK WITH THE TALIBAN TO REBUILD THE COUNTRY.

¶10. (S) COMMENT: MUJAHID HAS LONG INDICATED HIS OWN OPPOSITION TO UBL AND SUPPORT FOR BETTER RELATIONS BETWEEN THE U.S. AND THE TALIBAN. IT WAS CLEARLY GRATIFYING FOR HIM TO DELIVER THE NEWS THAT UBL HAD LEFT TALL BAN TERRITORY. MUJAHID WAS MORE EMOTIONAL DURING THIS SESSION THAN IN ANY PREVIOUS ENCOUNTER.

TALBOTT